

Remarks in Tampa, Florida

February 9, 2023

Hello, Tampa! Azucena, thank you for that introduction. Mayor Castor, thanks for the passport into the city. I don't know where you're sitting. I'm looking. There you are. Thanks for the passport.

And I want to also thank the Members of Congress here today: Kathy Castor, who represents this district, and Darren Soto. Both good friends. And two champions for opportunity, health care, and a safer climate for the people of Florida.

And I can't stand here and not tell you how much I admire Charlie Crist. Charlie? I don't think you're finished. [*Laughter*]

Look, there are so many things we could focus on today at this great university, from education to foreign policy and a whole range of other issues. But earlier this week, I reported on the state of the Union. I said—[*applause*]. I said it's because of the people of this country, the resilience and the strength, the soul of the Nation is strong and the backbone of this Nation is strong and the people of America are strong.

It's never been a good bet to try to count us out. Never, ever, ever.

We're often told that Democrats and Republicans can't work together. But as I told my Republican friends on Tuesday, if we could work together the last Congress—and we did—there's no reason we can't work together to get things done as well in this Congress.

And Pat Baskette, an old friend of mine, when I was up in the Senate for 270 years—[*laughter*]*—*knows I know what I'm talking about on that score.

We passed more major pieces of legislation in our first 2 years together—Democrats and Republicans—than any administration in history:

The bipartisan infrastructure law—that was a trillion 200 billion dollars we agreed on to make us number one in the world again.

The CHIPS and Science Act, which is causing the investment of \$300 billion—\$300 billion to build these new "fabs," they call them—factories to make chips, which we invented here in America, I might add.

The PACT Act, which is to save the families and keep our commitment to all those who found ourselves in real trouble. We bipartisanly passed the Respect for Marriage Act. Don't tell me we can't get along.

Years ago, I wrote—and there was great consternation over it—but we reauthorized it again: the Violence Against Women Act. The Electoral Reform Act. And, folks, we did that in a bipartisan way. Democrats and Republicans did it. I don't know why they don't want to acknowledge they had any part of what's making the country great again.

But in addition, we passed the American Rescue Plan, the Inflation Reduction Act.

And the people sent a clear message: Fighting for the sake of fighting gets us nowhere. There's things that—we've got to get things done. That's always been my vision for the country, and I think that's what the American people said in this off-year election.

Yesterday I went to Wisconsin—nice and warm like down here—[laughter]—to talk about how we're building an economy from the bottom up and the middle out. I'm so tired of trickle-down economics. Not a lot trickled down to my dad's table when we were growing up.

Today I came to Florida to talk about a critical piece of that plan, giving families and seniors just a little more breathing room, my dad would say, to lower your health care costs, and especially important here in Florida.

As I'm not surprised—surprise to any one of you, it is to other people around the Nation—you have the highest percentage of seniors of any State in the Nation. The highest percentage.

Folks on fixed incomes relying on Social Security and Medicare to get by, they deserve a greater sense of security and dignity. That's what my plan offers.

Too many Americans lay in bed at night, staring at the ceiling, wondering, "What happens if I get sick, if I get—if I get cancer or my wife gets breast cancer or we—or the kids get really sick? What happens? What happens? Are we going to have to sell the house? What are we going to do? How are we going to pay our bills?" I know my dad did that when he lost insurance at the company he worked for.

Look, I get it. I signed the Inflation Reduction Act and took on the most powerful interests we've been fighting for years—Pharma—to bring down health care costs so you can have a better night's sleep. Although we passed it in the middle of last summer and we let people know what was in it, no one saw it because it didn't take effect until January 1 of this year. Not a minute too soon.

One in ten Americans has diabetes. Millions need, every day, insulin to stay alive. Insulin has been around for 100 years. As a matter of fact, the guy who invented it didn't patent it because he thought it should be available to everybody.

It costs drug companies roughly \$10 a vial to make, \$13 total to package it. Yet Big Pharma has been unfairly charging people hundreds of dollars more and making record profits. But not anymore.

We've capped the cost of insulin at \$35 for seniors on Medicare. But there are millions of Americans not on Medicare—millions, millions—including 200,000 young people with type I diabetes who need this insulin to save their lives. Let's finish the job and cap insulin at \$35 a month for everyone who needs it.

You know, we pay more—I know Charlie knows this—we pay more in prescription drugs than any country in the world. Let me say that again. The United States of America pays more in prescription drugs than any country in the world. And there are many drugs, like expensive cancer drugs, that cost up to \$10-, \$12-, \$14,000 a year.

Well, as of this year, they can be charged no more and they can pay no more than \$3,500 no matter what drug they get. And next year, it goes down to \$2,000 maximum they have to pay for drugs. No matter how expensive the drug is, the total for the year is only—has to be \$2,000.

And if drug companies raise prices faster than inflation, they'll have to pay Medicare back the difference. They'll have to pay them back.

We've also made common vaccines, like whooping cough and shingles and free for—instead of \$100 to \$200 a shot. They're free for all Americans.

And we're finally giving Medicare the power to negotiate drug prices. We've been trying to do this for years.

And by the way, if you'll just hold for a second, one of the things you—a lot of you know, who are in the military: We're able to—at the VA, they can negotiate the price they're going to pay for their—the drugs that soldiers and sailors and airmen, et cetera, need.

But Big Pharma, up to now, has always stopped our ability to negotiate with them. Well, we're the only—by the way, we're the only group in the world we can't negotiate with—wouldn't—couldn't negotiate with. But we finally got it done.

Bringing down prescription drug costs doesn't just save seniors money, it will cut the Federal budget by hundreds of billions of dollars. Not a joke. Because instead of paying 400 bucks, they're going to pay 35 bucks for it. That's the Government's cost. So this also brings down the deficit.

Do you guys have to stand the whole time? I'm sorry. *[Laughter]* Why don't you bring them some extra chairs here? For real. Do we have chairs out there? That—that's not right. *[Laughter]*

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Are you sure? I know you can do it, but——

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. All right. If you want to come up on stage, you can do that too, if you want to. *[Laughter]*

Look, this is pretty basic. It's pretty basic.

When I meet with the Republican—new Republican leadership, they say they're not going to raise taxes on anybody at all, and they're not going to do that, they're just going to cut.

And they say, "What would you cut?" I said, "Well, I'll start off, if you don't—if you don't stop trying to do away with the legislation I did to hold Big Pharma accountable, I'm going to cut, by hundreds of billions of dollars, the debt."

And they looked at me like, "What the hell is he talking about?" *[Laughter]* Well, guess what? You pay that cost.

Republicans—Republican Senators and Congressmen—and there are a lot of good ones—are still threatening to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act, which contains this legislation. Republicans in Congress have their way, the power we just gave Medicare to negotiate lower—lower prescription drug prices goes away. The \$2,000 cap next year on prescription drugs goes away. The \$35-a-month insulin limitation goes away.

And, by the way, I was able to get enacted an \$800-a-year in savings for Americans to get their health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. But guess what? They want that to go away too. They've been trying to get rid of the Affordable Care Act for years, and millions of people are on it.

If Republicans repeal the Inflation Reduction Act, we'll lose that \$800 as well. And all the people who get health care through the Affordable Care Act—20 percent of all the people who get their health care through the Affordable Care Act live in Florida—20 percent. And by the way, that's 3.2 million people. And they're still trying to take it away.

And I might note, just parenthetically—I'll get back to this, but—we were able to do all this, and I cut the budget by \$1.7 trillion. One-point—it's more than any President has in all of American history. And one of the reasons why—if you could hold for a second—one of the reasons why is because I thought it was time people began to pay their fair share a little bit.

You know, in 2020, there were 55 American corporations of the largest Fortune 500 companies who made \$40 billion. They paid zero—zero—zero in taxes. Now, I really did something offensive to them. *[Laughter]* I made them pay 15 percent. That's less than—that's less than a nurse pays or a firefighter. But that 15 percent, guess what? It paid for all of this.

Raise your hand—*[applause]*.

And I made a commitment when I got elected, and I'm going to keep it. I kept it; I'm going to keep it. No one making less than \$400,000 will pay an additional penny in tax. Not one single, solitary cent.

So, folks, this is doable. It's just about—I mean, I'm not going to embarrass anybody or myself here by asking you, "Anybody who thinks the Federal income tax system is fair, raise your hand." *[Laughter]*

It's not—look, you've got—right now there are a thousand trillionaires in Americas—I mean, excuse me, billionaires in America. A thousand. It went up from six hundred and some, just in 2 years. You know how much they—average pay—the average percent of their salary they—their income they pay? Three percent. Three. That was less than the police officers I met a little bit earlier.

Well, folks, look, make no mistake about it: If I—they try to raise the cost of prescription drugs or abolish the Affordable Care Act, I will veto it.

Look, the Affordable Care Act also includes this offer: If a State expands Medicaid—not Medicare—Medicaid for the poor, for low—so low-income folks can get health care, the Federal Government picks up 90 percent of the cost. That's the deal. Ninety percent.

Well, guess what? The State only pays 10 percent. It's a great deal.

Thirty-nine States said, "Yes, send it to us." Only—only in Florida—11 States, including Florida, said: "No, no. We don't want Medicaid." No, I'm serious.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Over 1.1 million people in Florida would be eligible for Medicaid if Governor DeSantis just said, "I agree to expand it." It's not—this—this isn't calculus. *[Laughter]*

And by the way, it would also keep rural hospitals open. Why are they closing? No, think about this. All across America. I'll just talk about Florida for just a second.

When folks don't have Medicaid, they come in, and they're poor, and they're rural folks, they—the hospital can't charge them. There's nobody to charge. There's no money. They take care of them if they come through the door.

But eight rural hospitals have already closed in Florida since 2005. Eight. And seven others are at risk closing in rural Florida. That's more than a third of all the rural hospitals in this State. And it matters.

Do you know what the reason—the further distance a hospital is from your home, if you have a tragedy—if you have an accident, the higher the percentage is you'll die, because it takes so long to get there, to the—nearest hospital. That's just a statistic.

The only reason Medicare expansion hasn't happened here is politics. It's time to get this done. It really is. And if you've done it, you've been elected. I really mean it.

I really don't get it. It's not like you're the poorest State in the Union.

Look, now, you may have seen we had a little bit of a spirited debate at the State of the Union. [Laughter] I—[laughter]—well, I guess I shouldn't say any more. [Laughter] But we—particularly with Social Security and Medicare.

Republicans seemed shocked when I took out the pamphlets they were using about cutting Medicare and Social Security—read from, you know, Senator Scott's proposal; read from a proposal from the Senator from Wisconsin. They were offended. "Liar! Liar!"

By the way, the last person who said that on the floor of the Senate got censured by the Senate—by the Congress. But there were about four or five—I don't know how many.

I reminded them that Florida's own Rick Scott was the guy who ran the Senate campaign committee for Republicans last year, had a plan to sunset. Maybe he's changed his mind. Maybe he's seen the Lord. But—[laughter]—but he—wanted to sunset—meaning if you don't reauthorize it, it goes away—sunset Social Security and Medicare every 5 years.

Now, it's not likely to get voted out, but I tell you—I tell you what: It's likely it got cut drastically if you had to do it every 5 years.

The very idea the Senator from Florida wants to put Social Security and Medicare on the chopping block every 5 years I find to be somewhat outrageous, so outrageous that you might not even believe it. But it's what he—I won't do it again, but—well, I will. [Laughter]

[At this point, the President read from a brochure.]

Twelve-point American Rescue plan. One of the points: "All Federal legislation sunsets every 5 years. If the law is worth keeping, the Congress can pass it all over again."

Look, if it doesn't get reauthorized, it goes out of existence. If Congress wants it, they've got to keep it, and they've got to vote on the same thing. And then, in case there was any doubt, just yesterday he confirmed that he still likes his proposal.

Well, I guarantee you, it will not happen. I will veto it. I'll defend Social Security and Medicare.

Well, Senator Scott is not the only one. Senator Johnson of Wisconsin, in his own party plan, he laid out Social Security should be on the chopping block every year. But look, in his case, as I said, he wants to do it every single year.

Let's remember what this is all about. Some of you are on Social Security or your parents or grandparents are. You earned it. You earned every single penny, and you paid into every paycheck you ever got. From the time you were a teenager, you had money taken out for those programs.

They're more than Government programs, they're a promise—a promise—we made: Work hard and contribute, and when the time has come for you to retire, you'll be there—we'll be there for you to help you out. It's been a sacred trust, the rock-solid guarantee generations of Americans have counted on, and it works.

The number of seniors living in poverty has plummeted since Social Security was created. And now these guys want to cut it. I don't get it. I really don't. I don't know who they think they are.

We saw, on Tuesday night, Republicans don't like me—being called out on this. They were not very happy with me pointing this out. [Laughter] But their words speak—look, I know that a lot of Republicans, their dream is to cut Social Security and Medicare. Well, let me say this: If that's your dream, I'm your nightmare. [Laughter]

And by the way, that may be redundant; I think they already think I am. But—[laughter]. But if anyone tries to cut Social Security, we're going to stop it. If anyone tries to cut Medicare, we're going to stop it.

And look, when I called the Republicans out on this on the State of the Union, they sounded—and they started yelling, "Liar"—not all—but started yelling, "Liar! Liar!" And I said, "That means you all are for keeping Social Security?" And they all stood up and said, "Yes." I said, "Well, we've got a deal." [Laughter]

Sounded like they agreed to take these cuts off the table. I sure hope so. I really mean it. I hope so. Because they stood up; the vast majority of them said, "Yes, we will not cut Social Security or Medicare." Now, granted, I'll believe it when I see it. [Laughter]

But we're going to both lay down our budgets very soon. The Speaker of the House has been reasonable in terms of discussions with me so far. He talked about all these things. I said, "Look, why don't we just"—by—I think it's March—first week in March—"why don't we just lay out our budgets? You put yours down, and I'll put mine down. And our people will sit and compare them, decide where we can make a compromise if we can make a compromise."

When I put mine down, they're going to see I lowered the deficit this year by \$2 trillion, in what I'm talking about.

And by the way, the last fellow who had this job, who never showed up at the transition, I might add—but the last guy who had this job—[laughter]—he increased the Federal debt—which took over 200 years to accumulate. That's what the debt is, by the way. We talk about the Federal debt. It's every penny owed since the inception of this Nation and the interest rates that followed it. Okay? That's what it is.

Just in 4 years, he added to that Federal debt of over 200 years by 25 percent. And by the way, he had a \$2 trillion tax cut, the vast majority went to the superwealthy. And guess what? Didn't pay for a single, solitary cent of it.

I will not cut a single Social Security or Medicare benefit. In fact, I'm going to extend the Medicare trust fund for at least two decades. And we'll not raise taxes on anyone making over 400,000 grand. And I'll pay for it all, my proposals, by making the wealthy and big corporations pay just a little bit more.

Like I said, do you think a trillionaire should be staying at 3 percent? Look, I'm a capitalist. I—if you can make a million or a billion—I said "trillion." If you make a billion or a million dollars, God love you. But just pay something. No, I mean it sincerely. Just pay something.

Capitalism without competition is exploitation. Some Republicans in Congress even threatened to have the—America default on its debt for the first time in American history if we don't agree to the cuts they want or don't agree to end—and they will not agree to any tax increases on anything.

Well, Democrats have never, ever done that. Our national debt has accumulated well over 200 years. We haven't missed a payment ever in America. Why in God's name would we give up the progress we made for the chaos they're suggesting?

This Nation has gone through too much. We've come too far to let that happen. And I won't, and I don't think you will either, at least not on my watch.

Let me close with this. Just look at what we've done over the last 2 years.

Twelve million new jobs created. More jobs created in 2 years than any time in American history. More than—[applause]. Eight hundred thousand manufacturing jobs. Where in God's name is it written that we can't lead the world in manufacturing again, like we used to?

The lowest unemployment rate in 50 years. Inflation coming down 6 months in a row with more to go. A record 10 million Americans have applied to start a small business. Ten million. Never happened before.

It's clear our overall economic plan is working, but there's much more work to do. Now, let's build on the progress we made. Let's protect lower prescription drug costs for seniors. Expand health coverage for more who need it and can't get it. Defend and strengthen the Social Security and Medicare system. Keep building the economy from the bottom up and the middle out. We know we can do this.

I've long said it's never, ever—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—it's never, ever been a good bet to bet against the American people. And I can honestly say—[*applause*]. We've got a lot—a lot—more to do, but I've never been more optimistic about America's future.

Just remember who we are, for God's sake. We're the United States of America. Nothing—nothing—is beyond our capacity if we work together.

So God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. at the University of Tampa. In his remarks, he referred to Tampa, FL, resident Azucena Abed; former Rep. and Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; Patrick Baskette, senior vice president of strategic initiatives, Strategies 360, Inc.; Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin O. McCarthy; and former President Donald J. Trump.

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Locations: Tampa, FL.

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